

# WOMEN, SCIENCE & UNIVERSITY

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What is gender equality?

It has not been reached

But it is necessary

- ★ It is a **constitutional principle** that stipulates that men and women are equal before the law.
- ★ But for it to be efficient it should also involve **equal opportunities**.

- ★ Women are **under-represented** in faculty, higher level posts and decision-making bodies.
- ★ There is a remarkable **segregation** of disciplines.
- ★ The **dropout rate** of women is higher than the male one.

- ★ To incorporate **new perspectives** and not represented talent in order to improve the excellence.
- ★ To **maximise** innovation, creativity and competitiveness.
- ★ To set up an **attractive environment** that allows women to develop as professionals.

## When did it begin?

The fight for equality in the education field started in the XVIII century, but it would not have any result for over 100 years.

The **8 of March of 1910** women were officially accepted into Spanish universities. Despite the fact that, taking advantage of the lack of a prohibiting law, the first ones had already been studying since 1870. From that moment, more women joined this pioneers. Besides what people tend to think, they **preferred science** titrations. It was later on, in the 60's, when the Faculty of Arts began its rising.

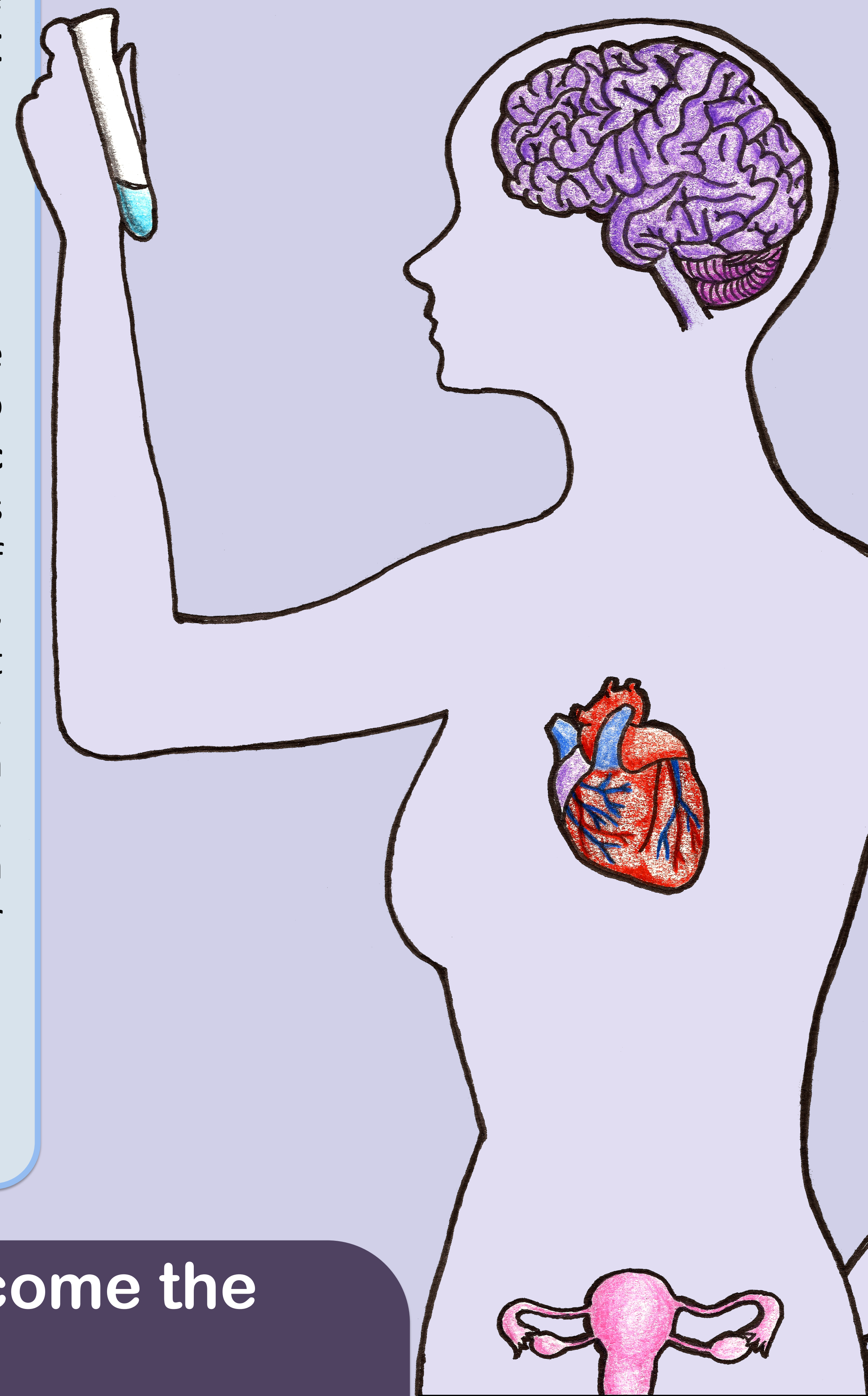
## So, what is blocking EQUALITY?

The main reason explaining the gap between men and women is the **SOCIETY** itself and the **GENDRE STEREOTYPES** that take part in it.

♀ = **Private sphere**    ♂ = **Public sphere**

Women were excluded of the academic world for a long time. So men established an **androcentric organization of science** which has contributed to the perpetuation of male-dominant elites. As a result, women now have to deal with what has been called the *glass ceiling* (i.e. the invisible barriers that stop women from accessing positions of power). Consequently, the number of women decrease as we move up the power ladder.

**40%** Lecturers    **23%** Professors



### "Science for men, Art for women"

It is a common belief that men and women are not made for the same disciplines. Although neuroscientists have found structural and functional divergence, the truth is that there is no evidence of **cognitive differences**. Meaning, both should be able to perform equally in any area. Furthermore, **intelligence** is not a fixed factor, it can actually be expanded with effort and training. So, the idea of women not having equality because of biological drawbacks can be ruled out. But the **social implications** are still a major problem.

### "Women have no interest in science"

**Interests** are not inborn, they are built up during life, mainly biased by the surrounding context. They are also shaped by the chances of success, so having a **positive self-assessment** is essential for any women entering the science field. Another crucial factor is having a **supporting network**, formed by friends, family, and a mentor with education and promotion competences. But perhaps, the most important circumstance for women developing as professionals is being in a **supportive and integrating work environment**.

### "Scientist and mother, two incompatible jobs"

Historically, the idea of feminine inferiority has been linked to their **ability to conceive**. This capability is one of the most frequent arguments explaining why women can not compete in the labour market at the same level as their male colleagues. Women still carry the weight of children upon their backs, but the **personal and work life** must be reconciliated in order to reach equality. The situation in university has improved (maternity leave, part time absence), but gender roles and prejudices continue to be a setback in the road towards equality.

## How can we overcome the barriers?

In **Universities**:

- ★ Build a comfortable environment in which equity in the treatment to all the workers is a priority
- ★ Review the policies supporting the balance family-work

At **every educational level**:

- ★ Teach children that the "intelligence" can be developed with effort
- ★ Show them examples of successful scientist women as role models

And the things that **we can all do** individually:

- ★ Raise awareness of the implicit biases
- ★ Support feminine leadership

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